

29 MAR 1971

CIA-4-Lao S

## 21 U.S. Volunteers Criticize Laos Push

By a Sun Staff Correspondent

Saigon, March 28—Twenty-one American volunteer workers in Laos have written President Nixon criticizing the U.S.-supported South Vietnamese invasion of Laos as expanding the war "once more into populated areas west of the invaded territory (and) aggravating already serious fighting elsewhere within Laos.

While the invasion may have been designed to speed American withdrawal from the Indochina war, the workers wrote President Nixon, "the military reality will be further chaos and further suffering among people who have already suffered much because of American military activity."

### "Grand Global Design"

"We condemn this policy that uses the Lao people as pieces in a grand global design they neither understand nor care about," the letter said. "Though there would still be fighting without the American involvement, the intensity of the present destruction takes place for reasons that have virtually nothing to do with local political alignments or conditions."

The letter was signed by 21 of the 36 volunteers working in Laos under the auspices of the multinational International Voluntary Services as specialists in education, agriculture and social welfare. All the signers are Americans. The letter was released by the group's affiliate here.

The volunteer workers also condemned as "particularly vi-

cious" the extensive American bombing of both northern Laos and the Ho Chi Minh supply trail in the country's Southern Panhandle.

"Refugees tell of being forced to live in holes and caves, of having to farm at night, of the systematic destruction by U.S. warplanes of the human basis for a society," the volunteers said. "These people were not soldiers nor were there soldiers in their villages."

Also criticized was the organization of Meo tribesmen into a semi-clandestine army directed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which the volunteers said exploits the Meos' "traditional toughness and independence in life's own crusade against communism."

### Decimation, Dislocation

"The result has been the decimation and dislocation of the tribal populace . . . Much of their traditional culture has been destroyed . . . Our use of these people has also opened a nearly irreparable breach between them and the North Vietnamese."

The volunteers also condemned "the destruction and killing brought by the North Vietnamese, but we do not believe that their presence in Laos, nor the presence of an indigenous Communist movement, justifies U.S. military activity against an entire society."

"We also condemn," the letter said, "the eagerness to protect American lives by the sacrifice of Asian lives."